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ABRAHAM LINCOLN, THE DEMOCRATIC SPIRIT AND THE POETS OF THE PEOPLE.

Lincoln and the Fundamental Ideal of Popular Rule.

TO ONE who believes in fundamental democracy, no event of recent years has been so pregnant with inspiration as the nationwide celebration which marked the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. Coming as it did in the flood-tide of the most dangerous and determined reaction from fundamental democratic ideals and principles that has marked our history, it has given a new inspiration and hope to thousands who were all but despairing of the success of popular rule in the presence of the aggressive, determined and powerful march of the feudalism of privileged wealth, operating through political bosses and money-controlled machines, and the pliant tools of predatory wealth in state, press, school and church.

True, the enemies of democracy,—the political bosses, the handymen of the interests, the usurpers of powers not granted by the constitution,—one and all, seeing the profound admiration of the people for the great champion of common humanity and popular sovereignty, of justice and human rights, made haste to bulwark their threatened popularity by the hollow praise that has ill accorded with their lives and actions as the long prayers of the Pharisees were inconsistent with their practice of robbing widows and orphans, in the days of the Great Nazarene.

But barring this fly in the ointment, this praise of those who, were Lincoln here to-day, would be his bitterest enemies and whom he would have scorned because of their assaults upon the fundamental principles of popular government, the Lincoln celebration has been the most significant and inspiring event of years. It has filled the popular mind with great ideals and truths that those who are so industriously and actively seeking to establish class rule under the robes of republican government most dread to see emphasized. It has flooded the imagination of the rising generation with the light of democracy, so hated and feared by the reactionary interests and up-

holders of monarchal, aristocratic, plutocratic, oligarchical or the modern hybrid despotic rule, which is born of a union of privilege-seeking classes with corrupt bosses and their money-controlled machines.

No great statesman since the days of Jefferson believed more implicitly or whole-heartedly in the genius of democracy than did Abraham Lincoln. He gave sincere and whole-hearted allegiance to the great fundamental principles which differentiate a democratic republic or popular rule from all forms of class government,—the principle that the voter is the sovereign and master, and the official merely the representative, steward or servant, under sacred obligation to carry out the wishes and conserve the interests of his master, as opposed to the theory of despots, whether emperor, king, aristocracy, oligarchy, or the present-day political boss, that the officials are the masters and the people the servants.

Lincoln's ideal of the true position and the duty of the official in a government like ours was clearly set forth in his frank statement made to the electors when, as a candidate for the Legislature, he asked their suffrage.

"If elected," he declared, "I shall consider the whole people of Sangamon my constituents, as well those that oppose as those that support me. While acting as their representative I shall be governed by their will on all subjects upon which I have the means of knowing what their will is."

In his admirable sketch of Lincoln, Mr. Brand Whitlock well says:

"The whole theory of representative government was never more clearly understood, never more clearly expressed. Even then he had an occult sense of public opinion, knew what the general mind was thinking. Always fundamentally democratic, he was so close to the heart of humanity that intuitively he measured its mighty pulsations, and believed that the public mind was not far from right. Years afterward, expressing his belief in the people's judgment as the one authority in affairs, he asked, 'Is there any better or equal hope?'"

A Nation Under the Spell of the Great Commoner.

No one can estimate the beneficial influence upon the idealism of the nation and the Republic of to-morrow which flowed from this country-wide celebration in which the millions of the public schools no less than the reading adult Americans had their mental vision centered in an informing way upon the noblest representative of the democratic spirit since it was so splendidly embodied and expressed by Thomas Jefferson. The genius, the ideals, the principles and the blessings of democracy were so embodied in the thought and the life of the martyred president that no man can read his history without having the broader, nobler and juster ideals born of advancing civilization aroused and stimulated; and here from ocean to ocean school children were studying the life of Lincoln in order that they might prepare essays, compositions, orations and discussions dealing with his life and its fruition.

Lincoln as Viewed by a Southern Editor and an English Essayist.

The great press for the hour seemed to forget the narrow limitations that too often mark it in this later day, and vied with school and forum in paying tribute to the man, his life and achievements. The familiarizing of the mind of the people with Lincoln and his ideals by the press has amounted almost to a new baptism of the people with the spirit of democracy. The editorials, life sketches and anecdotes have been complemented by the republication of master poems and tributes of other days and the giving of new estimates and characterizations of Lincoln and the great passages in his life, by men eminently fitted to accurately and dramatically deal with their subjects. To us two of the most interesting brief prose tributes and estimates were called forth by the celebration were from the pen of Henry Watterson, the famous Southern editor, and a critical characterization at once reminiscent and descriptive, from over-seas, penned by that highly intuitive thinker and graphic and incisive essayist, Francis Grierson.

Mr. Watterson in the March *Cosmopolitan* contributed one of the most notable essays on Lincoln that has appeared. Every paragraph is richly worth the reading. The article is marked by a broad, judicial and truly statesmanlike spirit very pleasing to the lover of that which is finest in human thought. Space renders it impossible for us to quote this most

interesting contribution of the distinguished journalist and old soldier of the Confederacy.

Mr. Grierson's tribute to Lincoln appeared in an English publication, *The New Age*. After mentioning the fact that his father had removed from the old country to Alton, Illinois, when the writer was a small boy, and that he enjoyed the rare privilege of hearing the last of the great historic series of debates between Lincoln and Douglas, Mr. Grierson gives some epigrammatic characterizations of the great President that were made by famous men with whom he was later acquainted in Washington during the administration of Lincoln. Among these he calls to mind Don Piatt's observation. "His body," said the brilliant editor of the *Washington Capital*, "was a huge skeleton in clothes; his face defied artistic skill to soften or idealize, yet it brightened like a lit lantern when animated. His dull eyes would fairly sparkle with fun, or express as kindly a look as I ever saw, when moved by some matter of human interest." While the well-known Indiana statesman, the Hon. George Julian, characterized the laugh of Lincoln as being like that of "Sartor Resartus," "a laugh of the whole man from head to heel."

Mr. Grierson then gives his impression of Lincoln,—an impression so graphic and unhackneyed that we quote somewhat at length from it:

"Abraham Lincoln belonged to that rare class whom Edmond Scherer calls '*les grands melancoliques*.' Of these I find two sorts: those who laugh because they can, and those who languish because they lack the faculty of laughter. Humor is the safety-valve of genius, a 'scape-pipe for the vapors of apprehension and melancholy. Statesmen and soldiers without this gift rush in where angels fear and devils dare not tread. A tragic gloom made Bonaparte a wandering lunatic, Bismarck a marauding minotaur, and Gladstone a man who saw everything with only eye.

"A practical humorist is a man who can see himself double, one who can stand outside his own body and behold himself as others would see him if for one moment he let himself commit the ridiculous. He can, if he pleases, be his own accuser, his own counsel, his own judge, and his own jury, and finish by discharging himself from the bar of his own reason without a stain on his character.

"Now, Abraham Lincoln was the greatest practical humorist of his time, perhaps of all

time. Where Disraeli used his wits for the advancement of his person or his party, Lincoln used his for the good of the whole country, the furtherance of a universal principle. He laughed at his own stories, but the moral remained; and a humorous story which points a moral is better than a moral that produces depression. Other men could very well have been mistaken for what they were not. Washington might have passed for a country squire, Disraeli for a lawyer or sculptor, Gladstone for a judge or bishop, Whitman for a country schoolmaster, Poe for an artist or musician. Alone, of all the great men of his own country, Abraham Lincoln bore the imprint of Nature on every feature, the sign of the Western soil, the virgin wilderness, the unsullied atmosphere, the untrammelled dominion of individual freedom. There was about his dark, rugged face and his gaunt figure something that harmonized with the dark, silent waters of the Mississippi in its least romantic aspects; for Lincoln, whose existence was one long romance, was the least romantic mortal that anyone could possibly imagine. He was not an artist, like Disraeli, nor a prose-poet, like Burke, nor a man of imaginative eloquence, like his great rival Douglas; and for a very good reason—he had no imagination. Humor and imagination were strong points in Disraeli, humor and logic in Lincoln.

“None of the American humorists were men who had the imaginative faculty strongly developed; and Mark Twain is so little of a poet that only once in his most serious book, *Life on the Mississippi*, does he speak adequately of the great river, and then only in ten lines. While Disraeli displayed humor and imagination, humor and logic held Lincoln to mother earth, to plain statements, plain facts, and plain people. Mark Twain has been successfully imitated, Whitman is far from insurmountable, Poe’s detective stories have engendered a host of successful emulators. To imitate Lincoln one would require to be born again; no one ever looked like him, no one ever acted like him, no humor was ever so intimately related to far-reaching vision, moods of melancholy, and moments of incommensurable and incommunicable power. Beside him the academical politicians of Virginia and Massachusetts appeared provincial rhetoricians, book-worms, or fanatics. His long, lank body, awkward hands and feet, his ill-fitting clothes, the inexorable individuality of his head and face made the senatorial aristocrats at Washington look like tailors’

dummies from London or intellectual automations from Boston. He spoiled reams of their classical rhetoric by a page of witty reason, conciliated party fanaticism by the suave logic hidden in his outbursts of pleasantry, and sterilized the poison of patriotic bigotry by a combination of patience, tact, and prophetic intuition such as was never known before in the history of politics.

“When, in May, 1861, three months after the outbreak of War, Secretary Seward prepared a carefully worded despatch to the American Minister at the Court of St. James it was Lincoln who took the despatch in hand and, with erasures and additions, proved himself a past grand-master in the mystical diplomacy of words, an adept in the art of phraseology. This despatch, corrected by the backwoods President with so much cunning and wisdom, prevented the irreparable calamity of a war with England.

“A high-pressure education means a low-pressure of knowledge. One of the secrets of Lincoln’s power lay in the fact that no one ever pressed him to learn anything. A university is a forcing-tube where the brains of genius go in at the big and come out at the little end, like patent tooth-paste or refined vaseline, the free application of which is supposed to inoculate others with the divine virus of a lingering classicism. Lincoln had the miraculous good fortune to escape the filleting process. He went through life with all his awkward bones untwisted, with his lank frame, his languid movements, heavy countenance, quick wit, dreamy moods, and clear vision. Although he was always observing and always learning, no one could add an iota to the will, the character, or the substance of the man. At the age of thirty-six he was alluded to as ‘Old Abe,’ and what he was at twenty he remained to the day of his assassination.

“Abraham Lincoln changed not only the customs, habits, and opinions of the major portion of the American people, but the opinions and sentiments of millions of people in other parts of the world. He was not a type. He loomed unique and solitary, like a sphinx in the desert of Democracy, a symbol of destiny and disruption in the Ethiopian night of modern slavery.”

Lincoln and the Poets of the People.

Fine as has been much of the voluminous prose writing on Lincoln that has appeared in

connection with the centenary of his birth, we doubt if anything has appealed to the popular imagination, especially that of the rising generation, in so compelling a manner as the many fine poems called forth by the occasion, and the republication and wide dissemination of the distinctly great personal poems relating to Lincoln's life and death that appeared long ago. Some of these poetical writings are so richly worth preserving and are so instinct with inspiration for our young that we reproduce them in this paper. The most distinctly great poem that the Lincoln centenary called forth was, as we would naturally expect, from the pen of democracy's laureate, Edwin Markham. It was entitled "The Coming of Lincoln" and appeared first in the *New York American* and Mr. Hearst's other papers.

Men saw no portents on that winter night
A hundred years ago. No omens flared
Above that rail-built cabin with one door,
And windowless to all the peering stars.
They laid him in the hollow of a log,
Humblest of cradles, save that other one—
The manger in the stall at Bethlehem.

No portents! yet with whisper and alarm
The Evil Powers that dread the nearing feet
Of heroes held a council in that hour;
And sent three fates to darken that low door,
To baffle and beat back the heaven-sent child.
Three were the fates—gaunt Poverty that chains,
Gray Drudgery that grinds the hope away,
And gaping Ignorance that starves the soul.

They came with secret laughter to destroy.
Ever they dogged him, counting every step,
Waylaid his youth and struggled for his life.
They came to master, but he made them serve.
And from the wrestle with the destinies,
He rose with all his energies aglow.

For God, upon whose steadfast shoulders rest
These governments of ours, had not forgot.
He needed for his purpose a voice,
A voice to be a clarion on the wind.
Crying the word of freedom to dead hearts,
The word the centuries had waited for.

So hidden in the West, God shaped his man.
There in the unspoiled solitudes he grew,
Unwarped by culture and uncramped by creed;
Keeping his course courageous and alone,
As goes the Mississippi to the sea.
His daring spirit burst the narrow bounds,
Rose resolute; and like the sea-called stream
He tore new channels where he found no way.

The tools were his first teachers, sternly kind.
The plow, the scythe, the maul, the echoing ax
Taught him their homely wisdom and their peace.
He had the plain man's genius—common sense,
Yet rage for knowledge drove his mind afar;
He fed his spirit with the bread of books,
And slaked his thirst at all the wells of thought.
But most he read the heart of common man,

Scanned all its secret pages stained with tears,
Saw all the guile, saw all the piteous pain;
And yet could keep the smile about his lips,
Love and forgive, see all and pardon all;
His only fault, the fault that some of old
Laid even on God—that he was ever wont
To bend the law to let his mercy out.

Mr. Markham complemented the service to the cause of democratic progress which he rendered in preparing the above poem, by giving to the public a carefully revised and greatly enlarged version of his justly popular personal

poem on Lincoln,—a poem which in its present revised form is, in our judgment, without question the gratest personal poem in American literature.

When the Norn Mother saw the Whirlwind Hour
Greatening and darkening as it hurried on,
She left the Heaven of Heroes and came down
To make a man to meet the mortal need.
She took the tried clay of the common road—
Clay warm yet with the genial heat of Earth,
Dashed through it all a strain of prophecy;
Tempered the heap with thrill of human tears;
Then mixed a laughter with the serious stuff.
Into the shape she breathed a flame to light
That tender, tragic, everchanging face.
Here was a man to hold against the world,
A man to match our peaks and plains and seas.

The color of the ground was in him; the red earth;
The smack and tang of elemental things;
The rectitude and patience of the cliff;
The good-will of the rain that falls for all;
The friendly welcome of the wayside well;
The courage of the bird that dares the sea;
The gladness of the wind that shakes the corn,
The mercy of the snow that hides all scars;
The secrecy of streams that make their way
Beneath the mountain to the cloven rock;
The underlying justice of the light
That gives as freely to the shrinking flower
As to the great oak flaring to the wind—
To the grave's low hill as to the Matterhorn
That shoulders out the sky.

Sprung from the West,
The Great West nursed him on her rugged knees.
The strength of virgin forests braced his mind;
The hush of spacious prairies stilled his soul.
Up from log cabin to the Capitol,
One fire was on his spirit, one resolve—
To send the keen ax to the root of wrong,
Clearing a free way for the feet of God.
And evermore he burned to do his deed
With the fine stroke and gesture of a king:
He built the rail-pile as he built the State,
Pouring his splendid strength through every blow,
The conscience of him testing every stroke,
To make his deed the measure of a man.

So came the Captain with the thinking heart;
And when the judgment thunders split the house,
Wrenching the rafters from their ancient rest,
He held the ridgepole up, and spiked again
The rafters of the Home. He held his place—
Held the long purpose like a growing tree—
Held on through blame and faltered not at praise.
And when he fell in whirlwind, he went down
As when a lordly cedar, green with boughs,
Goes down with a great shout upon the hills,
And leaves a lonesome place against the sky.

Lincoln's place in the Valhalla of democracy is assured. He was one of the noblest apostles of freedom, justice and popular rights that has arisen since the dawn of the democratic era. He came on the stage in one of the greatest crises known to modern history,—an hour big with fate, and he discerned fundamental principles so clearly that none were able to becloud his mind, even at a time when the clamor of discordant and warring voices had confused the thought of many and obscured the basic truths even to the vision of most statesmen of the time. To clarity of thought were wedded single-heartedness and transparent sincerity, love of justice that amounted to passion, reverence for truth, and tenderness of heart, combining to make him a noble personification of the genius of democracy.

COLORADO SPRINGS' NEW MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT, SAFEGUARDED BY THE INITIATIVE, REFERENDUM AND RIGHT OF RECALL.

AT a time when Massachusetts is presenting to the world one of the most shameful and humiliating spectacles that has marked her history, in the refusal of the legislature to grant to Boston the fundamental right which distinguishes a popular representative government from all forms of despotic class rule, other American cities are embodying democratic provisions in their charters for safeguarding popular rights and the interests of the citizens from corrupt political machines and their master corruptors, the great privileged interests that render the political boss well-nigh invincible.

Colorado Springs is one of the latest of the growing American cities to adopt a municipal charter properly safeguarding popular or democratic government. The new measures were adopted by the overwhelming vote of 3,161 to 263. The new government is of the commission type. The mayor and councilmen are elected by the people, and these men are the responsible servants of the people, each one heading one of the five departments of the government, namely, water and water-works, finance, public health and sanitation, public works and property, and public safety.

Special provisions are made to preserve non-partisan rule. A majority of all votes cast is essential to an election. If there is no majority, a second election is held.

The features of the government that are of special interest to friends of popular rule and which will work to the immense benefit of the citizens of Colorado Springs may be briefly summarized as follows:

No franchise can be granted except on the

vote of the people. The electorate reserve the right to regulate fares and rates, and may license street cars, meters, poles and similar features. Each corporation is required to make a detailed annual report, and the city receives on all franchises 3 per cent. of the gross receipts for the first fifteen years, and five per cent for the remainder of the life of the franchise. The city may purchase any public utility, and no franchise can be granted for a period of more than twenty-five years. On the petition of 30 per cent. of the voters an elective officer may be removed from office through the Recall. The Initiative and Referendum require the signature of fifteen per cent. of the voters. No official is allowed to receive any free service from a corporation.

The weak point in the above is found in the great number of signatures required for the Initiative, Referendum and Recall. Especially is this regrettable in the case of Direct Legislation. Experience has amply proved that the number of signatures provided for in Oregon, Switzerland and in other places where Direct Legislation is efficiently and effectively in operation is ample, and there is no probability of the popular right being abused. On the other hand, where great interests desire to compass their ends, they are not only able, as has been the case time and again, to procure legislation adverse to the interests of the people, but their influence over the press and other public opinion-forming agencies is sufficiently large to render it difficult in cases where it is most important for the friends of clean, pure and just government to get the proper number of signatures. Hence the excessive percentage as provided in Colorado Springs is most unfortunate.

AN APPEAL TO AMERICAN MANHOOD IN BEHALF OF FREE INSTITUTIONS.

The Rapid Rise and Steady Encroachment of Reactionary Ideals and Class Interests.

NO ONE can have followed closely the rise of the feudalism of privileged wealth and

its steady encroachments everywhere, without observing that there has been a corresponding decrease in the sturdy, liberty-loving, independent and justice-dominated spirit that made the Republic in her early days the moral leader of